



Senator Colapietro, Representative Shapiro and Members of the General Law Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Joe Kuzma. I am Senior Director, Corporate Programs for the Connecticut Chapter of the American Red Cross. I am here today representing the American Red Cross in expressing our support for passage of Raised Bill 186, **AN ACT CONCERNING AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS IN HEALTH CLUBS.**

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is one of the leading causes of death among adults in North America. Each year, it claims the lives of an estimated 250,000 in the United States alone. Once every one or two minutes, another American succumbs suddenly, without warning.

Prompt administration of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can help. But CPR cannot restart a heart by itself. In more than two-thirds of all cardiac arrests, an electric shock, known as defibrillation, is needed. Studies show that prompt CPR followed by early defibrillation can reduce death from sudden cardiac arrest. The links in the cardiac chain of survival include early activation of the emergency medical system (EMS), prompt CPR, early defibrillation and advanced cardiac life support (post-incident care provided in a hospital setting). Weakness in any link lessens the chance of survival.

The average response time for first responders once 911 is called is 8 to 10 minutes. For each minute defibrillation is delayed, the chance of survival for a person in cardiac arrest is reduced approximately 10%. Having an AED on-site at Health Clubs – or other public facilities for that matter – can clearly make a big difference in a patient's likelihood of survival.

By enacting legislation to support the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and by increasing the number of individuals that are trained to respond, the survival rate can be increased significantly. Some studies indicate early CPR and defibrillation can double survival rates for sudden cardiac arrest that occurs outside hospital settings.

State legislators around the country have proposed more public access to AEDs, in public buildings, transportation centers, large offices and apartment buildings. Good Samaritan laws in all 50 states now provide legal protection for responders who use defibrillators to help save or sustain a life.

Because AEDs are easy to use and the device requires little instruction on use, several states have recently passed legislation mandating the placement of AEDs in public places such as schools, including Texas and Georgia, as well as here in Connecticut, where public 09-94 will soon take effect, and health clubs, including the states of Oregon, Arkansas, California and New Jersey.

Based on the facts above, it is clear that increased availability of AEDs in public places will save lives. Health clubs and schools are two excellent examples of places that would make a life-saving difference by having AEDs on site. Health clubs have high concentrations of people engaging in strenuous physical activity. Having an AED on site and a staff person trained in its use could be the difference between life and death for someone who suffers sudden cardiac arrest at a health club facility.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express our support of this important bill.